



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

The war goes on

We all know the homosexual political movement has for years been waging war on traditional American society on many fronts, and one of the battles in that war has been over so-called "gay conversion therapy."

Also known as reparative therapy, gay conversion therapy is the idea that practicing homosexuals can, with appropriate therapy, convert their lifestyles to heterosexuality if they so desire. We've been told for decades that homosexuality is hardwired in the brain and as natural and unalterable as skin color and dimples. A person has no choice other than to accept his/her homosexuality, the argument goes, nor do his friends and family. A homosexual is a homosexual for life.

There are many examples of the unfairness and untruthfulness of that argument. Robert Spitzer, a highly-respected professor of psychiatry now retired after a long academic and research career at Columbia University in New York City, issued a study in 2001 that found 66% of men and 44% of women surveyed who wanted to change had achieved "good heterosexual functioning."

A self-avowed atheist, Spitzer led the charge in 1973 that successfully removed homosexuality from the American Psychological Association's classification of mental disorders. He certainly can't be accused of being a religious nut or a homophobe, yet he has produced solid evidence that gay conversion therapy has merit.

"I'm very pleased that there is a study that shows people like me exist," Tim Wilkins told Baptist Press shortly after the study was released. Wilkins is a former homosexual who was convicted of his sin and turned his life around.

Those of us who have asked Jesus Christ to turn our lives around should avail ourselves of the twin opportunities of praying for the lost and personally striving to lead them to faith in our beloved Savior, regardless of their sins. He worked a miracle in each of our lives. He can work a miracle in anyone's life.

Stories like Wilkins' should not come as a surprise to Christians. We know Jesus Christ can deliver us from anything and set our feet on the right path. We know

that a person who really wants to change can turn his back on a lifetime of sin when Jesus is involved. We know that a person can quit drinking, lose weight, stop smoking, overcome drug addiction, or cease gambling, when Jesus is involved.

Despite inarguable evidence that gay conversion therapy can be successful in both secular and spiritual contexts, the homosexual political movement is determined to legislate it out of existence.

A few years ago New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, a Republican currently in the fight of his political life for reelection, signed into law a bipartisan bill that criminalizes gay conversion therapy for teenagers in that state. The bill's original sponsor in the legislature called gay conversion therapy "an insidious form of child abuse."

Not long after that, the Ninth U.S. Circuit of Appeals in San Francisco upheld a similar California law that passed the state legislature with bipartisan support and was signed by Democrat Governor Jerry Brown.

The campaign to discredit and criminalize gay conversion therapy is gradually progressing — usually under our radar — and no small number of opportunistic politicians on both sides of the political aisle will be more than happy to assist the homosexual movement with expanding the initial bans into other parts of the country.

Mississippi has no shortage of opportunistic politicians, so look for the issue to pop up in the state legislature, sooner than later.

Those of us who have asked Jesus Christ to turn our lives around should avail ourselves of the twin opportunities of praying for the lost and personally striving to lead them to faith in our beloved Savior, regardless of their sins. He worked a miracle in each of our lives. He can work a miracle in anyone's life.

May we, the privileged saved, be found faithful in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

My Lesson in Obedience

I learned real obedience the hard way. It was my privilege to attend and graduate from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. When I arrived to begin my first year, I had no idea what was in store during what is called plebe year.

"Plebe" was the title we wore and whenever you heard the word, you knew that very likely it was not going to be good. Plebes back in my day went through a boot camp-type experience marked by enormous physical challenges involving some pretty tough hazing from the upperclassman.

Additionally, there was very demanding regimentation in the form of restrictions that placed plebes on the academy grounds seven days a week except for five hours on Saturdays (if one was not working off demerits). Not only was there no dating, but a plebe was not to be caught speaking to a girl. Riding in a car was not allowed either.

Mealtimes were filled with passing the chow and answering professional military questions all while bracing up, which required a plebe to get into a rigid attention-like posture while tucking one's chin as far into one's neck as possible. If one did not know the answer to a question, the only acceptable response was "I'll find out, sir."

If a plebe returned to the next meal without the answer, he might hear the words "shove out" — assuming a sitting position without the benefit of a chair — or "come around." That meant showing up at the upperclassman's room at 6:15 in the morning or at 6 p.m. prior to evening meal formation.

What followed in both cases was 30 minutes of pushups or perhaps uniform races requiring a plebe to race back to his room and change from one uniform into another or sometimes into multiple layers of sweat gear or facing a multitude of other commands devised by the upperclassman.

It was generally misery for the plebe; it all demanded absolute obedience.

The taxpayer might wonder if the expense of such ridiculous training is worth the investment. My answer lies in painting the following scenario:

A young Naval Academy graduate is on the bridge of a multimillion dollar vessel serving as the officer of the deck (OOD).



Guest opinion
with Doug Metzger

He's in charge. Everything seems to be going well until the commanding officer (CO) enters and, with his vast experience, sees a dangerous situation requiring an immediate course change.

The CO says to his OOD, "Mr. M., right full rudder." Let me tell you what the CO doesn't want: excuses, or the offer of a better idea, or delay. He demands and expects instantaneous obedience so the young officer's immediate response is, "Aye, aye, sir."

He has learned through his training that obedience is the only way to make the CO happy. It is also the only way to stay out of a world of trouble.

Does this have anything to do with my life as a believer? Sure enough. My life is to be one of seeking to follow my Lord wherever He leads and to do whatever He says to do. Excuses are not acceptable.

As to having a better idea, there is no better way than God's way, and delayed obedience is nothing more than disobedience. My response to my Father in heaven is to be, "Aye, aye, Lord, to Your will and to Your way."

It took a year-long boot camp for me to learn well what it meant to give total, instantaneous obedience to those in charge over me in the Navy. Most believers have never had such training and unfortunately appear to be slow learners in the school of hard knocks as to what obedience to God would mean for their lives.

There is a great truth found in the hymn, Trust and Obey. Oh, that those in the body of Christ would learn and practice such obedience. It could indeed be a great step forward toward needed revival!

Metzger is a retired pastor living in Canton, Ga. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and length.

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New IMB missionaries appointed in Virginia

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — As a preschooler in Mission Friends, new Southern Baptist missionary Amy Jones learned about God's desire to gather people from every nation, tribe, people group, and language by His grace and for His glory.

"It became real when my mother returned from England with stories and a tea set," Jones recalled during the Sending Celebration Nov. 16 that marked the appointment of 32 new International Mission Board (IMB) personnel at the Southern Baptist entity's office in Richmond, Va.

"Europeans are fascinating peoples but too few follow Christ, so I began to pray for them," she said.

Her husband Casey recounted how God brought the couple together at Travis Avenue Church in Fort Worth, Texas, where they helped develop leaders and start churches. "Now, [our church] is sending us to Europe where the world celebrates 500 years of Reformation to participate in a new spiritual awakening."

Time and again during the Sending Celebration, the new missionaries shared how God's influence in their lives as children, teenagers, and young adults from all over the United States — and even from around the world — has matured into an obedience to share the Gospel among the untaught peoples and places.

Global influence

Candace Gagnon (not her real name) learned about missions as a child in Vacation Bible School, and then she participated in missions as a youth on a short-term trip to Mexico where God called her to international missions.

Her husband Kevin (not his real name) said the Lord used local church missions and employment at Christian summer camps to develop his passion for reaching the peoples of South America. The couple is being sent by Lawndale Church in Greensboro, N.C.

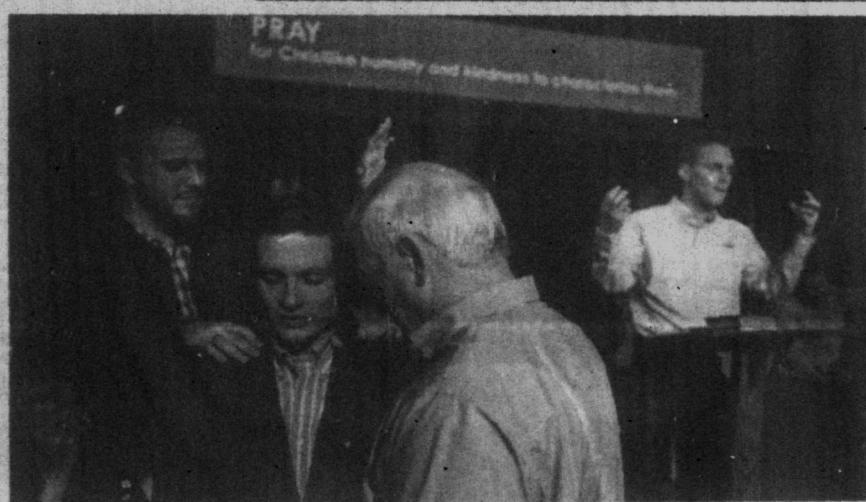
David Luca (not his real name) said growing up in Eastern Europe under a strict Communist regime gave him appreciation for having a Bible and reading God's Word. He later began reaching out to lost people in his home country and neighboring regions.

Now, he and his wife Julia (not her real name) are being sent by a church in Georgia to North Africa and the Middle East.

For Lucy Jackson (not her real name), it was missions discipleship training in Girls in Action at her church where she was first "exposed to the reality that not all people around the

More than anything else that I pray for you, I pray that what you do in the days to come will merely be an overflow of a love relationship with Jesus... that a heart for Him — a love and affection and adoration for Him — is what drives you on a day-by-day basis."

David Platt
IMB president



NEW MISSIONARY — Matthew Fisher, a new International Mission Board (IMB) missionary, is lifted in prayer by Gordon Fort, IMB ambassador for the president (front right), and Daniel Ethridge (left) from Liberty Church in Hampton, Va., who led worship. (BP/IMB photo)

globe have access to the good news of Jesus," she said.

Jackson and her husband Doug (not his real name) are being sent by a church in Georgia to North Africa and the Middle East. "God drew us to a missional inner-city community in Memphis where we were exposed to and challenged to seek the lost in hard places of this world," Doug noted.

Sean Hyong (not his real name) was in a worship service in high school with tears rolling down his face when he felt God leading him to take the Gospel to the nations. His wife Elizabeth (not her real name) was on a mission trip in college when God called her to full-time mission work.

The couple is being sent by their California church to the unreached peoples of Central Asia.

Margie Rose (not her real name), who is being sent by

her church in Virginia, shared how God brought her from an orphanage in Romania to send her to South Asia.

"I was called by God at summer camp while listening to the testimonies of missionaries," she said, noting God confirmed His call on her life while she ministered among Gypsies in Slovakia and during two years in South Asia.

Obedient response

Each life story shared by the new missionaries flows from a heart of obedience to Christ, IMB President David Platt said during the Sending Celebration. He called on the appointees to continue to pour out their lives in selfless love for Christ.

"More than anything else that I pray for you, I pray that what you do in the days to come will merely be an over-

flow of a love relationship with Jesus... that a heart for Him — a love and affection and adoration for Him — is what drives you on a day-by-day basis," Platt said.

"I have seen people manufacture a heart for missions and yet miss a heart for Jesus, and I don't want that to happen to you."

He referred to Matthew 26, where a quiet woman held an alabaster flask full of perfume worth a year's wages. She approached Jesus and poured the perfume on His head — an act Jesus ascribed as a gift of honor and beauty.

Platt noted the story revolves around the reality that Jesus was about to die, and the woman realized Jesus' death was the reason He came in the first place in order to save sinners.

"He came to live the life none of us could live," Platt said, "and



HEADED TO FIELD — International Mission Board (IMB) President David Platt (at podium), joined by some of the 32 new missionaries being sent by Southern Baptist churches to the nations, leads a responsive reading during the new missionaries' Sending Celebration Nov. 16 in Richmond, Va. (BP/IMB photo)

He died the death we deserved to die. Jesus took the judgment due our sin upon Himself... and the news just keeps getting better: Jesus has conquered death so that anyone can turn from sin, look to Jesus, put your trust in Him, and He will save you from your sin."

"Jesus is worthy of your unashamed, unrestrained, undivided, unadulterated devotion," Platt said.

Whether prompted toward full-time mission service as a child, youth, or adult, the new missionaries shared that their obedience to full-time mission service is rooted in that devotion to their Lord and the direction He has given through Scripture.

"In Psalm 96, we are instructed to declare God's glory among the nations and to tell of His marvelous works among all peoples," new missionary Harvey Sparks said. He and his wife Jenifer are being sent by Temple Hills (Md.) Church to Sub-Saharan Africa.

"In Mark 16, Jesus commands His followers to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole of creation," Jenifer said.

"In Scripture, the call to take the Gospel to the nations is clear and compelling, and so that is why we go," Harvey said.

It is Thanksgiving time and it is one of my favorite times and holidays of the year. A time just to stop and give thanks. Thanks to others, thanks to God, thanks for things that we may not even recognize in our lives that are a part of the outpouring of the blessings of God. It's Thanksgiving. I want to encourage you to join with me in thinking about thanking God for thorns in your life.

The Apostle Paul struggled with what the Scripture describes as the thorn in the flesh. While many have speculated as to what the thorn was no one actually definitely knows, but everyone of us have had thorns in our lives. Maybe you are like me. As a kid, oftentimes we would be playing in the yard; summer time games are lots of fun until you run into some stickers. I can remember thinking either I or someone else was dying from it. If you've ever been around some of the sand spurs down in Florida or the coastal areas, they will bring deep pain.

When Paul talked about his thorn in the flesh, you could make it a physical problem or an emotional problem or a mental problem or a spiritual problem and it would all fit and you would feel the pain that he was going through. It may be that you are going through some thorny experiences. For life, whether it's youthful and exciting, older and maturing, or senior adult and declining, has its thorny situations. Often thorny things are just situations, but at other times they show up as living, breathing people and that is just as thorny.

However they show up and whatever they touch in your life, the reality is you and I typically revert to our first response - get rid of this! That's what Paul did. In fact, he admits that three times he called upon the Lord to take away the thorn in the flesh. Get rid of this thorn, this pain, this sticky thing in my life to the point that he even pled with God to remove the thorn and God did not.



Thank God for Thorns

Can you imagine the frustration he must have been feeling? It might even be akin to the frustration that you may be feeling sometimes when the thorn doesn't go away, or God doesn't seem to want to or have time or care about intervening in your life to remove it. It stays and it continues to stick you. But while most folks know about the thorn in the flesh that Paul had, many do not read on to hear Paul rejoicing in the thorn, of giving thanks that he has the thorn.

If you go back and read 2 Corinthians 12:7 and following, you will find out some interesting and amazing things. You will find out that this was a painful thing that Paul was going through. You will also read in Scripture that the painful thing was known by God but it came from Satan. You will also read that the thorn was left there by God to keep Paul from being carried away by his own spiritual experiences that might make him conceited or arrogant in his own spirituality.

Finally, you may find that God told the great apostle - I know you have the thorn, but I'm going to give you some-

thing that is even greater than me just taking it away. "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). God gave the apostle Paul a glowing, glorious resource of His grace that would enable him to endure, to continue, to even be blessed by this thorn in his life. At this Thanksgiving season, it would be easy to try to pick out one or two or three or four good things to thank God for that you have seen Him do. You've been blessed because He opened up the windows of heaven and poured out some good blessings on you. I understand that there may be a thorn in your life. You may have struggled with it, prayed about it, wished God would remove it, and there it is still sticking you.

What is it that God may be trying to do in your life like He was working in Paul's life? Could you pause at this Thanksgiving time and say, "God, thank You for the thorn"? See here's the fact. In reality, real thorns sometimes slow you down and that is not a bad thing. Sometimes they will speed you up, and that is not a bad thing either. Sometimes thorns will shift

your way and change the direction of your life and that can be a glorious thing. Sometimes the thorns can show you a new thing in your life that you need and need to recognize. All those things seem to have been happening in Paul's life, and he came to the understanding that while this thorn came from Satan, God allowed it to happen so God could bless him.

I suppose if I got a thorn in my flesh today I would immediately want God to get rid of it. But at some point it may be that I would come to a new understanding and a yielding view of what God is doing in my life to even be able to say, "Thank You, God, for the thorn." Here's what we need to do.

One - look to God. He can remove the thorns. He can provide for us when we have a thorn and He may have a greater plan for our lives beyond the thorn. Two - listen. Listen to God trying to help us, explain to us, show us. He is not trying to hurt us, but to help us. And so if was that Paul looked to God and listened to God and then he limped on with God. Trust that God will help you. Even with the thorn, He can do great things through your life. Don't stop, just limp on. Determine that your attitude is not going to be sour and that your faith will be strong enough to say, "God, thank You for this thorn."

If and when you and I get there we might be able to join with the apostle Paul as he writes in that same passage. This is the conclusion he came to and said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). Happy Thanksgiving. Take a look at it and thank God for the thorns that have come in your life.

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College News



MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE sophomore Terry Cox (left) of Bay Minette, Al., and senior Drake Denson of Brandon placed first in the Cabela's Collegiate Bass Series event Nov. 4 at Neely Henry Lake near Gadsden, Al.



MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE freshman Emily Hootsell (front row, left) of Natchez and sophomore Bradford Sauls (front row, second from left) of Norris City, Il., place first in the mixed compound team shoot at USA 3D National Championships in Foley, Al. Sauls also placed first in men's compound class. Other, lower finishes were also claimed by the team.

In other College News:

► Mississippi College Theater Department is presenting the 10th anniversary performances of *Be Merry and Bright - the Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Performances are Nov. 28 - Dec. 1, 10 a.m., and Nov. 28 and 30, 7 p.m.

BIBLIOCRYPTHER

ZBST ULSTSP ZBSAE XTPSEMZDTPATC

ZBDZ ZBSQ JACBZ XTPSEMZDTP ZBS

MNEALZESM.

IXHS ZOSTZQ-VUXE: VUEZQ-VARS

Clue: Z=T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: *Acts 1:7*

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Richard Bennett is the state representative from District 120 - Harrison County on the coast. Richard Bennett is the Chairman of the Study Committee on the Lottery for the House of Representatives.

The final public hearing for Chairman Bennett and his study Committee was on Thursday, November 16, at 1:00 at the Capitol. On that morning, before the final hearing, Chairman Bennett made the following comments on statewide talk radio, and I quote, "Today we have, we invited everyone we could think of that might... We have casino people. We have religious organizations were [sic] invited. None of them are coming. They chose not to come and give an opinion either way on it. And that was a Baptist organization, Catholic, Methodist, I think the Episcopal, anyway, those for whatever reason, the religious organizations have chose [sic] not to get involved in it."

Having heard these comments on radio by Chairman Bennett, I went early to the final hearing. I approached Chairman Bennett. I

Set the Record Straight

introduced myself to him again (having done so at the very first hearing.) "I am Kenny Digby, Director of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. I am here, and very concerned about the lottery, and would like the opportunity to speak." Chairman Bennett said I was not on the list of those invited to speak, and was not on the program for the hearing. He said he would not allow me to speak at the "public" hearing.

I then told him that I had heard his comments on radio, and I needed the opportunity to set the record straight. The Christian Action Commission does care; we are against the lottery and gambling in any form. We are present and ready to give our opinion. I again asked for two minutes to speak at the hearing - to set the re-

cord straight. He again said he would not allow me to speak at the "public" hearing. I then made the following comment to Chairman Bennett, "Sir, I have never claimed to speak for you or know your mind. I would recommend that you not speak for others on radio or in public, especially for Mississippi Baptists." He then said I misunderstood his comments on radio. One can go read them for himself - Chairman Bennett needs to read his own comments.

Two minutes could have corrected misleading statements by Chairman Bennett. Two minutes could have set the record straight so that the Clarion Ledger newspaper would not have propagated the misleading public accusations of Chairman Richard Bennett toward faith based groups. Two minutes could have corrected

Chairman Bennett's false statements (whether willful or just ignorant.)

I think Chairman Bennett, with his comments on radio, willfully threw a grenade into the room to distract everyone from the real issue of the damage a state lottery will do to our communities across our state.

Hear me: we at the Christian Action Commission are opposed to a state lottery. I believe every member of the House and Senate knows we are opposed to the lottery - everyone except Chairman Bennett. We have been present and available at three public hearings by the Study Committee. We have tried to let Chairman Bennett know how we feel about the lottery - we would ask you to let him know how you feel about the lottery. Call him at 601-359-2860 or email him at rbennett@house.ms.gov.

Digby is executive director-treasurer of the Christian Action Commission. He can be reached at (601) 292-3329/office, (662) 284-9163/cell, or by e-mail at kdigby@christianaction.com.

Church Security: As crime rises, churches must plan

FIRST IN A SEVEN-PART SERIES

By Chester L. Quarles
(1944-2013)
Correspondent

Church crimes are increasing exponentially. While attacks are geographically isolated, they are occurring in almost every state on a regular basis. Sanctuary size or membership levels don't correlate when churches are selected as attack zones. Some churches are targeted because they are located in more vulnerable, inner-city locations. Other churches are targeted because they are "soft" and "easy" targets.

Churches are not safe havens! Criminals hold almost nothing sacred! Murder, robbery, burglary, rape, child abduction, pedophilia, and crimes at off-facility, church sponsored activities are becoming more frequent. Car theft and automobile break-ins are perpetrated during services, while burglary and arson are after-hours problems. Some targeting occurs during services.

In developing comprehensive security plans, we should always remember the words of our Lord in Matthew 10:16, when he challenged his disciples. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves." We need wisdom beyond ourselves and a recognition of the evil in our society. James 1:5 recorded, "If any of you lacks wisdom,

let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach."

Jeffrey Hawkins, in writing Security and Emergency Planning for Faith-Based Organizations, quoted an online July 2008 poll taken by the Christian News Web site, OneNewsNow.com. This survey indicated that over 75% of all responding Christian churches indicated that they had no security or emergency plans in place. Your church should be an exception to this statistic.

The first step in church security is to read the Word and pray for guidance in finding solutions to the complex issues of crime. The second step is to recognize and accept the fact that churches are frequently targeted. The third step is to form a security committee that is representative of all ministries, ages, and genders.

Crime Prevention Basics

- Stop denying crime threat.
- Recognize crime can be deterred.
- Read the Word.
- Pray for guidance.
- Form a security committee.
- Plan to prevent/deter/avoid crime.
- Plan for natural disasters.
- Establish a guardian program.

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

Matthew 10:16

best security programs are free! Even if security requires a financial investment, it is a wise expenditure when considering the vulnerability of not addressing your risks. Substantial liability results from a secular Pollyanna approach. Ultimately, lawsuits may be your highest risk!

Most churches already have a security program in place. A welcoming committee, sometimes called greeters, are components of an effective guardian program. A church member stands at each entrance and welcomes both members and visitors as they enter. Criminals don't want a greeter to look them in the eye or to shake their hand. They want to reconnoiter the premises to see if they can target your facility successfully.

A cold-hearted church that does not recognize nor greet visitors (indeed, the members don't even speak to their visitors) is like a magnet to a church criminal. Warm-hearted, caring churches are crime resistant by their very nature, but even a warm-hearted church needs a viable security and safety plan.

*Quarles, who died in October 2013, was professor emeritus of criminal justice and homeland security at the University of Mississippi, and co-author of the book, *Crime Prevention for Houses of Worship*. Copyright 2011. Used by permission. This series originally appeared aperiodically in *The Baptist Record* during 2011 and 2012. All rights reserved.*

Just for the Record



TRINITY CHURCH, ITAWAMBA ASSOCIATION, group Senior Adults Living Triumphant (SALT) depart on their fall foliage tour.



FIRST CHURCH, COLUMBUS, recently ordained three men as deacons: Jason Hilburn, Kyle Crawford, and Scott Shuttlesworth.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, WALNUT GROVE, dedicated Grayson Brown on Nov. 5. Pictured with Grayson are parents Josh and Shannon Brown, older brother Lawson, and pastor Michael Harper.



FIRST CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, on Nov. 4 hosted the Area 4 Mississippi Women's Missionary Union annual Missions Madness. A total of 106 girls and 39 leaders from 17 churches learned about missionaries and what God is doing in South America.



FRIENDSHIP CHURCH, ABERDEEN, and pastor Rick Burton recognized veterans on Nov. 12.



TRINITY CHURCH, CARTHAGE, Woman's Missionary Union collected non-perishable food items for the Leake County Baptist Food Pantry as their local October missions project.



In other Church News:

► **First Church, Jackson**, will celebrate World Missions Weekend on Nov. 29-Dec. 3. Linda Cooper, national Woman's Missionary Union president, will be guest speaker. For more information: firstbaptistjackson.org/events/world-missions-week/.

► **First Church, Jackson**, will host the 48th Carols by Candlelight marking Christmas with the Gospel through music on Dec. 14-17. Included will be the church's 300-voice choir and a full orchestra. Tickets are free and may be requested at firstbaptistjackson.org/events/carols-by-candlelight/.

► **Pleasant Hill Church, George-Greene Association**, will hold special services to celebrate Christmas. Nov. 29: choir from West Salem Church, George-Greene Association, will present O Little Town of Bethlehem. Dec. 10, 11:00 a.m.: George Smith, missionary to Uganda, will speak. Dec. 10, 5:30 p.m.: choir from First Church, Leakesville will present God's Greatest Gift.

► **Union Church, Tylertown**, will host its annual Live Nativity Scene on Dec. 1-2. Featured will be scenes from the time of Isaiah's prophecy to the baby Jesus with the Wise Men. Drive-through each night 6-7 p.m. Guided walk-through each night 7-8 p.m. For more information, call (601) 876-5388.

► **Holly Springs Church, Foxworth**, will celebrate the Hanging of the Green on Nov. 26 at 10 a.m. The Story of Amazing Love will include a children's musical number, adult presentations, a skit, and monologues. Dave Nichols, pastor. For more information, call (601) 669-0971.

► **First Church, Quitman**, will host a celebration honoring the retirement of Grady Crowell, missions director for Clarke Association in Quitman, on Dec. 2 from 2-4 p.m.

SARDIS CHURCH, WESSON, on Oct. 8 ordained Cecil Templeton as deacon. Pictured with Templeton are his wife Jennifer, pastor Billy Barnes, and Tyler and Vanda Brister.



WILLIAMSVILLE CHURCH, KOSCIUSKO, recently ordained Steve Lane (center) as deacon. Pictured with Lane are pastor Junior Davis (left) and Lane's wife Donna.

Just for the Record



WANILLA CHURCH, MONTICELLO, Fannie Wilson Sunday School Class recently held their annual Fall Soup Lunch. Jeff Vosbrink, pastor.



FRENCH CAMP CHURCH, FRENCH CAMP, on Oct. 29 ordained as deacons (beginning second from left) Robert Peacock, Scott Barlow, and Daniel Crowley. Pictured with the new deacons are Roy Hawkins, Choctaw Association missions director (left) and pastor Randy Bridges.



VALLEY GROVE CHURCH, PONTOTOC ASSOCIATION, recognized the church's veterans on Nov. 12. Shown are the veterans with pastor Greg Herndon (left).



NEW LIBERTY CHURCH, MORTON, honored their veterans on Nov. 12. Each veteran stood under their division flag. A patriotic cross pin was placed on each veteran's lapel.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, TUPELO, had special recognition and appreciation services for veterans of the church on Nov. 12. Pictured are (not in order) Billy Young, Ed Cooper, Ed Bowers, Mac Gregory, John Ellis, Andy Gregory, Steve Swann, Marky Pomeroy, and pastor Lowell Johnson.



RED BANKS CHURCH, RED BANKS, on Nov. 12 ordained Justin Luke (front row, third from left) to the Gospel ministry. Pictured with Luke are his wife Beth and daughter Eva Joy, his grandfather Jerry McCormick (second from left), his father John Luke (second from right) and church deacons.



CARMEL CHURCH, MERIDIAN, ordained Andy Maxwell (second from left) and Josh Timms (right) as deacons on Aug. 13. Also pictured are deacon chairman Larry Whitehead (left) and pastor Joe Anderson (second from right).

SPRINGFIELD CHURCH, MORTON, recognized members of law enforcement, first responders, and veterans with an American flag mounted on a wooden base and a flag ribbon lapel pin: James Sonnenberg, Joye Warner, speaker Ken McLemore, Jerry Miles, Carl Woolery, Kendall Winstead, Ronald Wade, and David Watts.



Puerto Rican pastor group shows appreciation for help

SAN JUAN, P.R. (BP) — The "heart and spirit of Southern Baptists" are evident as churches and leaders help Puerto Rico recover after Hurricane Maria, pastor Jorge Alvarez said Nov. 11 in San Juan.

Alvarez, executive director of the Convention of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands, was among 150 local pastors and guests who attended an appreciation dinner held in their honor.

The Hispanic Baptist Pastors Alliance (HBPA) organized the event held at the Sheraton Old San Juan Hotel. The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, the North American Mission Board and LifeWay Christian Resources supported the event.

"I am sharing with our leadership that we have a denomination that has not forgotten us," said Alvarez, pastor of First Church of Arecibo. "To the contrary, it has placed all their resources at our disposition, indicating the heart and spirit of Southern Baptists."

Frank S. Page, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee in Nashville, said the SBC appreciates the work of Southern Baptist pastors on the island.

"They have worked so hard and we want to give them a special time to show them that they are not alone," Page told Baptist Press (BP). "The devastation caused by Hurricane Maria is absolutely unprecedented. We are thankful for all the work that is being done by disaster relief. However, we wanted to reach out to the pastors in a way to show our love and appreciation for them."

Bobbi Sena, Hispanic relations consultant for the Executive Committee, also praised the pastors and their congregations. "I have no doubt that out of the ashes, rubble, and devastation, a new Puerto Rico church will rise up," Sena told BP.

"The pastors may have lost their homes and church building — and many of their members have become part of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the USA — but they have maintained their resolve to continue preaching, teaching and ministering, despite the conditions on the island."

"The tenacity and resilience of the pastoral leadership and their church membership are amazing," Sena said. "I went to encourage them and came away inspired. I will never be the same again."

An upcoming banquet is being planned to honor pastors in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"Despite the suffering and destruction that Hurricane Maria has inflicted on the church buildings, houses, and the lives of our people, [and] the exodus of many of the church members to the USA, the pastoral spirit is up, not down, and we are serving our communities and sharing the Gospel."

Jorge Alvarez

Convention of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands executive director



GRATEFUL — Still rebuilding after Hurricane Maria, Southern Baptist pastors and family members in Puerto Rico praised God at an appreciation dinner held in their honor in San Juan. (BP photo)

Ken Weathersby, Executive Committee vice president for convention advancement, told BP that Southern Baptists are praying for fellow believers and leaders in the Caribbean.

"We want the pastors to know that they are not alone, even though they are going through difficult times in this crisis. We as their fellow Southern Baptist brothers and sisters in Christ are praying for them, and we are doing everything we can to support them and provide necessary resources. Our churches have responded well."

Alvarez thanked Southern Baptists for their support, mentioning the Executive Committee, North American Mission Board (NAMB), Send Relief, state conventions, associations, and churches.

"Despite the suffering and destruction that Hurricane Maria has inflicted on the church buildings, houses, and the lives of our people, [and] the exodus of many of the church members to the USA, the pastoral spirit is

up, not down, and we are serving our communities and sharing the Gospel."

"Our pastors continue to be faithful to their calling in the Lord's ministry," he said.

Felix Cabrera, HBPA co-founder and board member, has spent weeks helping pastors recover.

"The majority of our Southern Baptist pastors have been the hands and feet in many of our communities and towns on the island," Cabrera said. "Week after week following the hurricane, they have provided physical food, water, and medicines, but also spiritual food."

"Because of that, the Hispanic Baptist Pastors Alliance decided to dedicate and invest time in the pastors, their wives, and children," said Cabrera, pastor of Central Church in Oklahoma City.

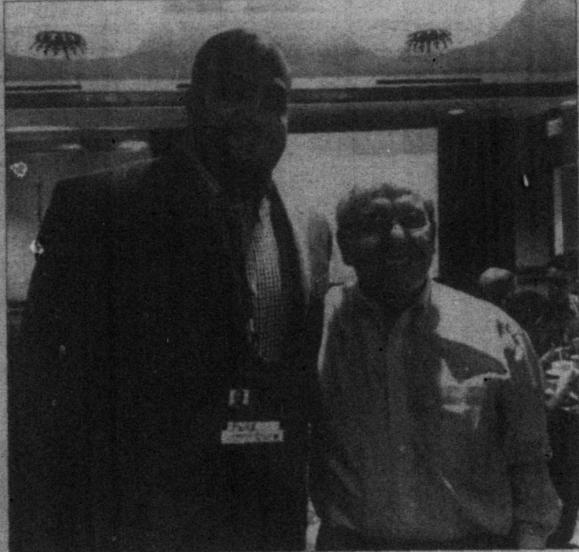
The dinner will strengthen pastors and "help them on the long road of recovery before them," Cabrera said.

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SHARING TIME — Hispanic Baptist Pastors Alliance President Felix Cabrera (left) fellowship with Bob Sena, Hispanic relations consultant for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, at an appreciation dinner in San Juan for Puerto Rican pastors nearly two months after Hurricane Maria. (BP photo)

NAMB Mobilization Leader Ramon Osorio told churches they can count on NAMB's support during their lengthy recovery.

"I am heartbroken for the conditions under which the people of Puerto Rico have to live. I am concerned about the challenges the church in Puerto Rico faces," Osorio said, "but I am excited for how the Lord is already moving in His church and about how Christ is being glorified and exalted by His people here."

The event's keynote speaker was Rolando Otoniel Sanchez Perez, pastor of the Baptist Church of Ozama in the Do-

minican Republic and director of the Dominican Baptist Theological Seminary.

Others in attendance were event moderator Xavier Torrado, pastor of Casa Rendora in Venga Baja, P.R.; event attendance mobilizer Junior Martinez, pastor of First Church of La Gracia, Yauco, P.R., and Alex Comesanas, pastor of Providence Road Church in Miami.

Jonathan Jerez, worship leader of Central Church in Oklahoma City, led those in attendance in worship.

LifeWay Christian Resources donated gifts to Puerto Rican pastors, Sena said.

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STAY FAITHFUL — Lysa TerKeurst, founder of Proverbs 31 Ministries in Matthews, N.C., encourages women leaders to stay faithful to the Scriptures at the 2017 LifeWay Women's Leadership Forum. (BP photo courtesy of LifeWay)

LifeWay forum designed to encourage women leaders

NASHVILLE (BP) — Facing breast cancer and the breakdown of her marriage, Proverbs 31 Ministries founder Lysa TerKeurst stood before 1,800 women on Nov. 9 at LifeWay's annual Women's Leadership Forum and urged them to remain steadfast in Christ.

TerKeurst's cancer diagnosis in October came on the heels of a June separation from her husband of 25 years due to his substance abuse and infidelity.

She told the leaders gathered at Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, Tenn., that having a cancer diagnosis and a marriage crisis happen so closely together was difficult, but that the Word of God was anchoring her and it could anchor them, too.

"So many things are happening to us as individuals," she said. "I see people staggering, wandering, and searching. They are hungry and thirsting for the Word of the Lord. There is a famine in our time for the Word of the Lord.

"We must expose the enemy of our soul so we can lead ourselves and lead others," TerKeurst continued, "and to do that, we must be steadfast in the Lord and in His Word."

Steadfast was the theme this year for the Women's Leadership Forum, which drew women from 43 states.

"The theme for this year is important because it's easy for leaders — regardless of role or season — to want to give up when things get hard," said Kelly King, women's ministry specialist for LifeWay.

The theme was based on the exhortation from 1 Corinthians 15:58 to "be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the



LONG TRIP — Janet Paolicelli, Christina Grant, and Jenner Shue (left to right) of Grace Fellowship in York, Pa., traveled a great distance to worship together and hear from some of women's ministry's most sought-out speakers. (BP photo courtesy of LifeWay)

Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

TerKeurst delivered the first keynote message of the forum, cautioning leaders to be faithful in their study of Scripture before attempting to lead others effectively.

"You can do all kinds of great seminars about how to lead, motivate people, and make numbers work," she said. "You can take personality tests or do Strengths Finder... but the one thing we must do as a steadfast leader is stay in the Word of God. You can read business books all day long, but it will not change your heart."

Bible teacher, speaker, and author Beth Moore outlined attributes Jesus possesses that live in those who believe in Him and that equip leaders to be steadfast in ministry.

"We are not called to merely 'get by,'" Moore said. "We're called to be effective and pro-

ductive... Everything we need to live profoundly effective lives, He has done."

Eric Geiger, LifeWay's senior vice president, encouraged the women to stay steadfast in leadership and ministry through character development.

"If your gifting outpaces your character — if your position weighs more than your integrity — you will fall," Geiger said. "This takes place with very gifted leaders."

Breakout sessions were led by key LifeWay leaders, including Connia Nelson, vice president of human resources; Trevin Wax, Bible and reference publisher; Faith Whatley, director of adult ministry; and Jennifer Lyell, director of book ministry area.

LifeWay authors who served as keynote speakers and breakout session leaders included Lissa-Jo Baker, Rachel Lovingood, Kelly Minter, and Angela Thomas-Pharr.

Mississippi WMU holds 2017 annual meeting in Jackson

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director-treasurer of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) in Birmingham, challenged participants at the 2017 annual meeting of the Mississippi WMU Oct. 30 in the chapel of First Church, Jackson, to "recall the great need that all people have to confess their brokenness and accept the restoration provided by Jesus Christ."

Special guests included missionaries serving in East Asia with Southern Baptists' International Mission Board, who shared the work of God in that area of the world and the need for prayers to undergird this work as they battle lostness in Jesus' name.

Dru Dilley, serving in Copiah County as an evangelism catalyst for Southern Baptists' North American Mission Board spoke of numerous avenues to reach individuals in Mississippi with the Gospel.

Mississippi WMU members also elected new officers. Judy Anderson of Saltillo was chosen as president. Terrie Harwood of Batesville was selected as vice-president. Rory Vanlandingham of Houston was tapped to serve as secretary.

"Judy Anderson is gifted and experienced for this time in the history of Mississippi WMU," said Janet Green, outgoing president.

Green also expressed "many thanks to Mississippi Baptists for allowing me to serve for the last four years as the state presi-

dent of Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union. It is always an honor and a joy to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Our Lord never takes our time, energy, and resources. Rather, in His manifold grace, He multiplies these things in our lives. It is my prayer in the culture of today that each believer will seek the face of our Lord to determine how He would have them serve Him to make a difference for His kingdom."

"May He use our prayers, gifts, and service to bring many in our world to abundant and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ."

Tammy Anderson, consultant in the Mississippi WMU office and coordinator of the annual meeting, said, "This annual meeting was unique in that it included visits from Living Legacies — Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon, Margaret Lackey, and Edwina Robinson — who shared missional challenges for today's leaders."

Past Mississippi WMU presidents participated by sharing motivational quotes from missions heroes like Jim Elliott, William Carey, Fannie Heck, Charles Spurgeon, and Hudson Taylor.

"This year's theme, By All Means, challenged us to 'become all things to all people so that by all possible means we might save some' (1 Cor. 9:22b, NIV). As participants, we were encouraged to engage our communities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ by any means necessary."



LEADERS GATHER — Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) leaders past and present enjoyed an Oct. 30 reception honoring outgoing president Janet Green during the annual meeting of Mississippi WMU at First Church, Jackson. They included (back row, from left) Joan Michel, president 1989-93; Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director-treasurer of national WMU; Donna Swarts, president 2005-09; Janet Green, president 2013-17; Sharon Neff, president 2009-13; Rebecca Williams, president 1997-2001; (front row, from left) Terrie Harwood, current vice-president; Judy Anderson, current president; and Rory Vanlandingham, current secretary. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Tennessee messengers vote not to seat church

HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local report) — Messengers to the Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) annual meeting voted overwhelmingly during the TBC's opening session Nov. 14 not to seat messengers from First Church in Jefferson City, which recently called a woman pastor who is a Mississippi College graduate.

The church attempted to register seven messengers which included new pastor Ellen Di Giosia, who has been in the position since Aug. 1.

The church's web site lists De Giosia as earning a B.A. degree from Mississippi College in Clinton and an M.Div. degree from Baylor University in Waco, Texas. The years of graduation are not included.

The web site also notes the church is dually aligned with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention.

In mid-October, the TBC Committee on Credentials met and agreed that a church with a woman pastor does not fit the definition of "cooperating church" as defined by the state convention's bylaws. The committee based its decision on Article VI of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 declaring that "the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

Di Giosia and the church contingent met with TBC registration secretary Dan Ferrell on the morning of Nov. 14 and were presented guest name badges and a bag of materials which included everything given to messengers, except ballots.

Curt Wagoner, chair of the Credentials Committee, moved that messengers affirm the committee's decision not to register messengers from the church. Several messengers spoke for and against the motion.



PARTICIPATION DECLINED — Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) registration secretary Dan Ferrell (left) speaks with Ellen Di Giosia (right), pastor of First Church, Jefferson City (Tn.), and other church members on Nov. 14 during the TBC annual meeting. (BP photo courtesy of Baptist and Reflector)

Tim Fields, a messenger from Immanuel Church in Nashville, spoke against the motion, noting that churches are autonomous and that Baptists traditionally have supported the concept of the priesthood of the believer.

Frank Bowling, pastor of First Church in Medina, agreed that churches are autonomous but also noted that conventions are autonomous. "The question is the autonomy of the local church and this body being able to express that same self-autonomy."

Tambi Swiney, associate pastor of Immanuel in Nashville, spoke against the motion, noting that First Church in Jefferson City "has a long legacy of faithful service to God."

Chris King, pastor of Hickory Grove Church in Huntland, urged messengers to affirm the committee's decision on the grounds of biblical compliance. "Compromising the Gospel is destructive to our cause," he said.

Kelly Moreland-Jones, a messenger from First Church in

Nashville, had a question for the committee: "Did Jesus tell you not to seat the messengers?"

She cited soul competency, the priesthood of the believer, and local church autonomy. "We trust God to call pastors of churches," she said.

Kevin Shrum, pastor of Ingleside Church in Nashville, agreed that First Church in Jefferson City has every right to organize as it sees fit, and the Tennessee Baptist Convention has the right to organize on the principles it has adopted, he said.

Shrum then called for the question and messengers voted to end discussion. By a show of ballots, the motion was overwhelmingly approved with less than 20 opposing votes.

Di Giosia and messengers met with news media following the vote and provided a statement acknowledging that while "some spoke to oppose this action, a majority vote of the messengers speaks on behalf of the

entire fellowship of churches, according to Baptist polity. Therefore, our church is no longer a part of the Tennessee Baptist Convention."

In response to a news media question, Di Giosia acknowledged it would have been simpler for the church not to send prospective messengers and stayed home. "We came because there needed to be clarity for our church and for the convention," she said, noting that had the church not sought to seat messengers, the convention itself would not have had opportunity to vote on the issue.

Di Giosia stressed "this was not a fight or a battle. It's a disagreement between brothers and sisters in Christ."

Randy C. Davis, president and executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, also spoke to news media following the vote, describing Di Giosia as "a good and godly sister in Christ."

"There was just a theological difference in how we interpret Scripture that relates to the female being the senior pastor of a local church," Davis said.

Voicing appreciation for how TBC messengers conducted themselves during the discussion, Davis said, "They were very civil and they exuded everything that we hold dear about our relationship to Christ."

The TBC leader said he hopes the action sends the message that "we are going to be committed to Scripture and that in spite of how others may interpret this action, it is very important that we have some anchors and that we have a belief system that is tied to Scripture."

He acknowledged TBC's confessional statement, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, is not irrevocable or infallible, "but it reflects what we believe about the Word of God."

Davis also noted that while other denominations and churches may affirm women pastors, "our network of churches, on this issue, has clearly stated where we stand."

He said the convention adopted the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 in 2006 and has affirmed it on four different occasions in four different ways since then.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name. (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR NOVEMBER 26, 2017

Set Futures • Leviticus 26:3-16, 40-45

Warning! Warning! Warning! In the distance you see yellow lights flashing across the caution saw horses. As you drive closer you observe a bright yellow sign with the word 'Danger' printed in bold black letters. You have two options; slow down or stop so you can determine the danger, or continue going full speed ahead. What will you choose? God's Word, the Bible, is filled with precepts and principles on how to live a life pleasing unto Him. However, it also provides warnings. If you choose to walk in disobedience there will be the consequences. In our final lesson for this quarter, we will see God's promise and His warning to the nation of Israel for the future. This warning is reiterated more emphatically in Deuteronomy 28. Bob Deffinbaugh states, "This chapter does not just contain words of warning, but also some of the greatest words of hope found in the Bible."

The chapter begins with a crucial warning in verses one and two. It is one the Israelites forgot many times and so have we, "You shall not make for yourselves idols." Idols would lead to the worship of false deities rather than the worship of the one true living God. The second warning was to keep the sabbaths and to reverence the sanctuary. Why? "For I am the LORD your God." This phrase is used repeatedly

throughout this chapter and marks the end of each section (vv. 13, 44, 45).

Promise (Lev. 26:3-13) — The first three verses outline the conditions. This focal passage outlines the divine blessings. Everything hinged on Israel's keeping of the Mosaic Covenant. "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give . . ." (vv. 3, 4) the blessings of: Fertility in the land (vv. 4-5), living in safety in the land (v. 5), removal of dangerous animals (v. 6), removal of the sword (v. 6) and victory over enemies (v. 7). The blessings were directly related to the Israel's possession of the land of Canaan.

God would provide peace and prosperity in the new land but His greatest blessing was the promise of His presence, "I will make my dwelling among you . . . and I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (vv. 11, 12 ESV).

Our greatest blessing is our salvation found in Christ and the power of His presence living within us. We have the blessings of His mercy, grace, faithfulness, steadfast love, wisdom, and all the riches found in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3; Phil 4:19, Col. 1:27; 2:2-3). God always keeps His promises, however people do not, therefore God issued a . . .

Warning (Lev. 26:14-16) — The next verses are pivotal. "But if you do not listen to me and will not do all these commandments . . . then I will do this to you." Take a moment to read verses 14 through 39. Basic-

ly, what you see is a reversal of the blessings. Instead of peace there will be peril. Instead of finding prosperity in the land, they would find poverty. The warning was loud and clear. If the Israelites disobeyed His commands, they would face His discipline. This discipline would also include suffering, defeat at the hands of their enemies. The heartbreaking reality, there would be a growing separation from Him.

Throughout this passage we also see the phrase 'seven times' or 'sevenfold' (vv. 18, 21, 24, 28). The nation of Israel could choose to disobey and then be disciplined. However, if they continued to "walk contrary" to God's commandments their disobedience would be sevenfold. But God provides a way to . . .

Return (Lev. 26:40-45) — There is no mincing of words, God promises to hear the confession of His disobedient people and to restore the relationship and fellowship. "If then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember . . ." (vv. 41b-42 ESV). Hope was and is found in knowing God offers forgiveness to all who turn to Him in repentance.

One final thought: "The God who gave the Israelites the law in order to guide them towards holiness was also aware of their complete inability of maintaining that holiness on their own accord. God knew humanity would need a Savior and sent His Son to die in our place. Leviticus points us to the holy God and to our desperate need for atonement in order to have a relationship with Him" ("The Study Bible for Women", by Patterson & Kelley).

Leathers is a member of First Church, Madison.

Andrew: Active Witness • John 1:35-42; 12:20-26

When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus, he said to Andrew: "Look, the Lamb of God," John 1:36 (CSB). The Andrew and another of John the Baptist's disciples followed Jesus and became fully convinced that Jesus was indeed the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Upon believing that Christ was the Messiah, the Gospel says: "He [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon and told him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated 'the Christ'), and brought Simon to Jesus," John 1:41-42 (CSB).

This gives some insight into who Andrew is:

1. He was a devoutly religious Jew seeking God's truth and had become a disciple of John the Baptist.

2. He was eagerly awaiting the coming of the Messiah and wanted to know more about what John the Baptist meant when he announced that Jesus was "the Lamb of God."

3. When he was fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah it was extremely important to him that he tell his family (Simon, "his own brother").

The New Testament identifies Andrew as:

1. Andrew Bar-Jona, son of John, the brother of Simon Peter.

2. He was a professional fisherman

who was in partnership with his brother and James & John the sons of Zebedee.

3. Probably born in Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee.

4. Executed by crucifixion, likely in Patras, a Greek city at a date that is uncertain, probably on an X-shaped cross.

There are many things we do not know about Andrew whose name means "Manly, Masculine, Strong, or Courageous." He did act decisively with faith and courage. This is why most New Testament scholars will consider Andrew as Jesus' first disciple. John the Baptist's other disciple in John 1:37 was probably John (Andrew and Peter's fishing partner) who wrote this account in the Gospel of John. If it is correct that John is the other disciple of John the Baptist who followed Jesus immediately in this account, we are reading the account of an actual eye witness and participant in the story.

Andrew had spent the rest of the day listening to Jesus when he left John the Baptist. Then for a little while, Andrew

and Peter continued their regular work as fishermen. Then one day, "Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him," Matthew 4:18-20 (KJV). See Andrew's strength and decisiveness again: "And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."

Andrew's decisive faith shows again in the story of feeding the large crowd with a little boy's lunch of 5 barley rolls and two small fish. "So when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge

crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, 'Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?' He asked this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do," John 6:5-6 (CSB). Philip didn't do well on this test because he thought it was impossible for them to feed this large crowd. But Andrew's faith was such that

he did better and began looking around and found hope, telling Jesus: "There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish — but what are they for so many?" John 6:9 (CSB). With Andrew's fledgling faith and the little boy's lunch Jesus told the disciples to seat the crowd of five thousand men and their families and take them the food he multiplied right before their eyes. Everyone ate their fill and 12 baskets of food were left over.

Let's look at one more incident that gives a glimpse into Andrew's effectiveness as a faithful leader and witness among the disciples. "Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. So they came to Philip . . . and requested of him, 'Sir, we want to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus," John 12:20-22 (CSB). The request of the Greeks is translated "Sir, we would see Jesus," in the King James. Many Baptist pastors over the years have put a note or a plaque on their pulpit reminding their listeners' desire in worship is: "SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS."

The challenge of Andrew's example is: would your family, other church members, or friends come to you as Philip came to Andrew for help to take people to Jesus?

Hicks is Associational Missions Director for Jasper Association.

MUSEUM

cont. from p. 1

"The Bible is the best-selling, most-translated book of all time and is arguably history's most significant piece of literature," Green has said of the Bible. "It has had an unquestionable influence on science, education, democracy, arts, and society."

This book has profoundly impacted lives across the ages, including my own."

Steve Green is a member of the family that owns Hobby Lobby and several other enterprises. The family is known for successfully fighting all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court against the Obama administration's attempt to force companies to provide abortion-inducing drugs and con-

traceptives to all employees.

Successive museum floors include a wide array of attractions, including walk-through theatrical exhibits immersing visitors in Bible stories, Bible history displays comprising 600 artifacts and 50 media programs, a 472-seat World Stage Theater, a 3,000-square-foot biblical garden, and a cafe offering Bible-inspired fare.

Smithsonian.com has de-

scribed the venue as one of nine "must-see" museums opening in 2017.

Among those who gathered alongside Green, who is Southern Baptist, were:

■ Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington.

■ Rear Admiral Margaret Kibben, a Presbyterian and chief of chaplains of the U.S. Navy.

■ Rabbi Stuart Weinblatt,

president of the Rabbinic Cabinet of the Jewish Federations of North America.

■ U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black, a Seventh Day Adventist.

■ U.S. House of Representatives Chaplain Pat Conroy, a Jewish priest.

■ Ron Dermer, Israel's ambassador to the U.S.

■ Yariv Levin, Israel's Minister of Tourism and others.



First Person: See this pair of delightful Christmas movies

By Phil Boatwright
Correspondent

Though a bit early to hang stockings over the mantle, it's never too soon to hear a retelling of the first Christmas. With that reasoning, Sony Pictures' premieres *The Star*, a new animated version of the birth of Jesus, in theaters now.

Alongside this kid-aimed adaptation from the perspective of the animal kingdom, I'd also like to feature *The Miracle Maker*, another interesting animated re-enactment of our Savior's birth.

The Star

The first thing I asked myself before viewing this movie was whether this Disney-esque interpretation of such a sacred moment in mankind's history comes across as sacrilegious. My conclusion — sacrilegious, no; somewhat frivolous, yes.

Not much regard is paid to reverential matters in this cynical age. Indeed, little respect is shown for anything anymore, except for countless kickoffs every Sunday. Some would argue that those cultural events have also been defiled.

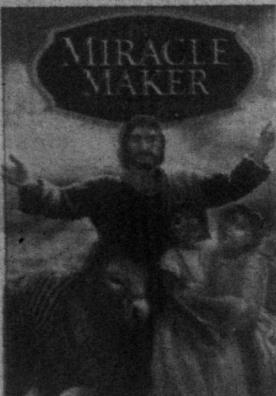
So, I wasn't thrilled with the idea of animated animals taking the spotlight off the infant who would one day change the course of man's destiny, but after seeing the screener I gave way to another view of this lighthearted treatment of a holy event.

Though rated PG, adults are not the targeted audience for *The Star*. The script has been fashioned in a way to make the spiritual aspect of the story understandable to its main demographic: little ones.

Gratefully, while utilizing his approach the filmmakers avoid



BOATWRIGHT



using Jesus, Mary, or Joseph as the brunt of jokes. Well, OK. Joseph, like most sit-com husbands, is a bit of a bumbler but it is clear he is a good man. Here, the animals represent mankind. It is they (we) who are bewildered until the true meaning of life is born.

I believe that as children enjoy the comic antics of Bo the donkey played by Steven Yeun, Aidy Bryant as Ruth the sheep, and Keegan-Michael Key as Dave the dove, they will open up to the picture's sincere and biblical conclusion.

What's more, I suspect the 86-minute film will cause family discussion on the drive home.

The cast of vocal talent also includes Gina Rodriguez as Mary, Zachary Levi as Joseph, radio personality Delilah Rene as Elizabeth, Christopher Plummer as King Herod, and playing other animals are Patricia Heaton, Oprah Winfrey, Tyler Perry, Tracy Morgan, Kelly Clarkson, Kris Kristofferson, Kristin Chenoweth, Anthony Anderson, Ving Rhames, and Gabriel Iglesias.

The Miracle Maker

The *Miracle Maker* also aids children in understanding the

story of Jesus, from His birth to His great sacrifice for mankind. With the use of Claymation and its graphically striking two-dimensional animation, this made-for-TV production from 2000 presents the life of Jesus through the eyes of a sick little girl who encounters Christ through different stages of His ministry.

Devised to have genuine family appeal, *The Miracle Maker* (rated, G, available at Amazon.com) is able to relate the Jesus of the Bible to little ones without sacrificing the integrity of the Gospels. The kid-vid combines two very different animation disciplines and adds vivid special effects to make this interpretation mesmerizing storytelling for older family members as well.

While watching a children's cartoon may sound as enjoyable as doing the dishes, it can have long-lasting rewards.

A few years ago I had to view each of the Tinker Bell made-for-DVD movies, both because I was reviewing them for several outlets and because my then-seven-year-old niece loved Tink. With each DVD, my beloved niece would sit on the floor and, from time to time, look back at me on the couch, making sure I was watching.

When I'd laugh at the exploits of Ms. Bell and her fellow fairies, my niece would be pleased that I was smart enough to appreciate the perplexities of her favorite forest wood nymphs.

My point: It means something to kids when you share a movie with them, and for years afterward it will mean something to you. Here's the secret — never make fun of the production. Hint: watch your little one enjoying the movie. That helps a whole lot.

Boatwright is the author of *MOVIES: The Good, the Bad, and the Really, Really Bad*, available at Amazon.com. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

So. Baptist leaders weigh in on Moore abuse accusations

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP and local reports) — As allegations of sexual misconduct against Republican U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore continue to roll in, Southern Baptist leaders have offered a range of commentary on the embattled conservative.

Moore's wife Kayla posted on Facebook Nov. 12 an endorsement of her husband by more than 50 pastors, some Southern Baptists, but Alabama's AL.com news website noted the endorsement appeared to be a "recycled" statement from Aug. 15, well before two women accused Moore of sexual contact with them when they were teenagers and he was in his early 30s.

Three pastors listed as signatories reportedly told news media outlets the Moore campaign did not ask them if they still endorsed Moore before republishing the statement, and they asked that their names be removed.

Meanwhile, Joe Godfrey, leader of the Alabama Baptist Convention's public policy auxiliary, told Baptist Press many of his state's evangelical voters are experiencing a "struggle" because they must choose between Moore, "who may have done something that is repugnant," and his Democrat opponent, whose support for abortion also "is repugnant."

Some Baptists including Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville; Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.; and Bob Terry, editor of the Alabama Baptist newspaper, criticized specific defenses of Roy Moore while not addressing the allegations against him.

Russell Moore is not related to Roy Moore.

On Nov. 13, a woman accused Roy Moore, 70, of sexually assaulting her in the late 1970s when she was 16. The previous week, another woman alleged Moore had inappropriate sexual contact with her when she was 14 and he was 32. Three additional women said Roy Moore pursued romantic relationships with them as teenagers when he was a young adult, according to The Washington Post.

Roy Moore has denied all the charges and says he is remaining in the race to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated when Jeff Sessions was appointed U.S. Attorney General by U.S. President Donald Trump. The election between Moore and Democrat Doug Jones is slated for Dec. 12.



MOORE

At least a dozen GOP U.S. senators, including Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have called for Moore to withdraw from the race in the wake of sexual misconduct allegations, according to news media reports.

Others like Southern Baptist James Lankford of Oklahoma have said Moore should withdraw, if the allegations are true.

Moore is Southern Baptist and a former chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court who has long drawn media attention for controversial stands like refusing to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the Alabama Judicial Building and advising probate judges not to issue same sex marriage licenses even after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling legalized same sex marriage.

He was finally booted from the Alabama Supreme Court for refusing a federal court order to remove the Ten Commandments monument, which he himself had commissioned.

The pastors' endorsement posted by Kayla Moore called Roy Moore "a man who cares for the people, a man who understands our Constitution in the tradition of our Founding Fathers, and a man who deeply loves America."

The statement, which appeared to include signatures of at least six Southern Baptists, added, "We are ready to join the fight and send a bold message to Washington: dishonesty, fear of man, and immorality are an affront to our convictions and our Savior and we won't put up with it any longer. We urge you to join us at the polls to cast your vote for Roy Moore."

Thad Endicott, pastor of an Opelika church that is not Southern Baptist, was among the pastors listed in Kayla Moore's Facebook post, but he told AL.com the endorsement "was evidently copied and pasted from the August endorsements without checking to see if I still endorsed Moore."

At least two other formerly-endorsing ministers made similar claims, one to AL.com and another to an Alabama Fox affiliate.

Baptist Press was not able to reach any Southern Baptists on the list of endorsers before publication deadline.

Godfrey, executive director of the Alabama Citizens Action Program, said many Christian voters in Alabama "find themselves in a dilemma of not knowing exactly what to do. The hope — and the prayer — is that new information is going to come out before the election that will either lead to Roy Moore stepping aside if the accusations can be proven or to him being exonerated."